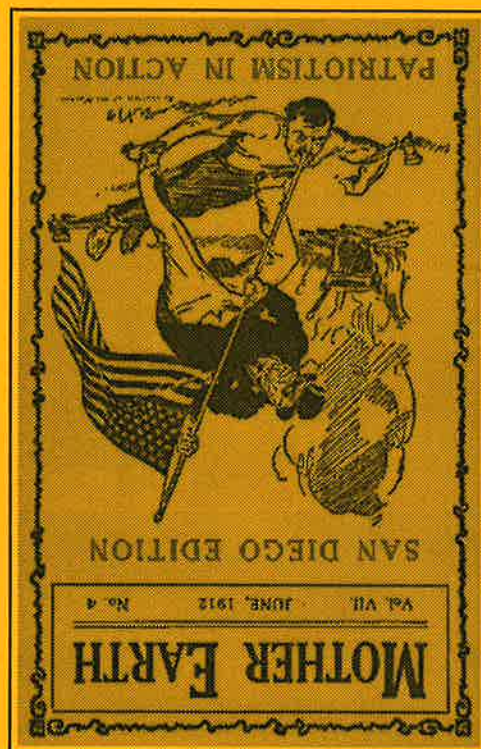


From Emma Goldman's Mother Earth,
June 1912.



THE MORE
THEY STAY
THE SAME...”

“THE MORE
THINGS
CHANGE...”

IWW - Madison Branch
PO Box 2442
Madison, WI 53701



PRAIRIE

NEWSLETTER of the MADISON BRANCH of the



FIRE

Vol.2 No. 2

June 2002

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS of the WORLD

MILWAUKEE IWW PICKETS WITH LOCAL DOCKERS

SEES WORKERS AT ODDS, CASE FOR ONE BIG UNION BECOMES APPARENT

Milwaukee GMB — Milwaukee Wobs supported International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) local 815 in early May as they continued their struggle to hold on to the remaining union docker jobs at the Port of Milwaukee. The issue this time was the same old song and dance, an imported cargo of clinker for cement unloaded by scab help from out of town. Last October, one of the first actions by the new Milwaukee GMB was picket line support for these same longshoremen, the workers who do the actual work of unloading ships. This time, Operating Engineers, Local 139 joined the longshoremen in their complaints. They lost jobs driving the loaded trucks to the storage facility.

The Greek-flagged CHIOS SAILOR, with her load of clinker from Cyprus, slipped into Milwaukee during the early hours of 10 May. Mechanical difficulties, part of the ethos of the lower levels of Greek shipping, had delayed the vessel's passage through the St Lawrence Seaway for over a week. The uncertain arrival played havoc with workers' plans for informational picketing.

Nevertheless, the evening of 9 May saw about 35 union members representing various organizations at a rally near the bulk storage facilities of Badger Cement Products, LLC. At the rally, supporters from IWW; United Electrical; Communications Workers; Steelworkers; AFSCME; Masters, Mates, & Pilots; Plumbers, and others, looked on as dignitaries from the Milwaukee labor council decried the loss of union jobs in general, and the decline of ILA representation in the Port of Milwaukee. Doug Kubic, Business Agent for Local 815, said union positions at the port numbered nearly 240 in 1992. Now, barely 40 longshoremen work regularly. The sad fact of the meeting, yet at the same time a gratifying fact, was that the six wobs present were the largest union contingent. The business union dignitaries offered no solutions, offered little encouragement, and went home early.

Near dawn on the 10th, the CHIOS SAILOR, under control of a District 3 Great Lakes Pilot, and assisted by two tugs, shot through the main entry into Milwaukee Harbor. The longshoremen had managed, against a strong west wind and cold temperatures, to launch a small floating picket line made up of a sailboat and some runabouts crewed by various union members including IWW. At that hour of the day and under the prevailing conditions, the picket line drew little attention and had no effect on the vessel's docking. Here another sad fact presented itself: the tug captains and the pilots belong to segments of the International Organization of Masters, Mates, and Pilots; itself part of the ILA. These FWs plainly did not view an injury to one as an injury to all. The pilot, who strongly advises a ship's captain concerning navigational matters, and is required on board by law, let an opportunity to anchor outside the harbor for a short while slip away. Time at anchor would have been a strong point in favor of further talks aimed at getting the unloading work for the dockers and would have emphasized local workers' displeasure and solidarity. When the CHIOS SAILOR was secured at the dock, the pilot left by the back way- aboard one of the tugs

From that time on, except for rainy periods when no cargo was worked, pickets patrolled the access road near the Badger Cement Products, LLC terminal from six in the morning to nine at night. Longshoremen and operating engineers maintained the line assisted by Wobs and others. At times the line was a lone



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RESISTING THE MAYORS – JUNE 14TH-18TH IN MADISON NEO-LIBERALISM: GLOBAL THREAT, LOCAL RESISTANCE

FW Jeff Ryan and Prairie Fire Staff — In 1974, Friedrich von Hayek and Gunnar Myrdal received a controversial Nobel Prize for their work in philosophical economics. These gentlemen, along with Milton Friedman, were at the center of a new Social Darwinist theory called neo-liberalism. Their philosophy is the force behind a revolution in global economic and social policy, and has justified an unprecedented accumulation of wealth for, and oppression of the masses by, corporate capitalists. Of course you are asking yourself, what the hell does this have to do with the 70th Annual US Conference of Mayors coming to Madison, June 14th-18th? Simply put, the USCM is yet another institution that has become part and parcel of the neo-liberal revolution facing our planet. So let's examine the tenets of neo-liberalism and its connections to the USCM.

First, we must define neo-liberalism. At its theoretical core, neo-liberalism is nothing new. In fact, it is a very old concept (classical liberalism dates back to Adam Smith, circa 1776) whose implementation led to the Great Depression. In an online article written by Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia, they define neo-liberalism as, "...abolition of government intervention in economic matters. No restrictions on manufacturing, no barriers to commerce, no tariffs." They go on to characterize the tactics of neo-liberal reform: The Rule of the Market (i.e., the rule of those who rule the market), Cutting Public Expenditure for Social Services (reducing the social safety net for the poor), Deregulation (reducing government regulation of everything that could diminish profits), Privatization (selling state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors), and Eliminating the Concept of "The Public Good" or "Community," (thereby forcing even the poorest people in a society to private solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security).

Next, a little history of the evolution of Neo-liberal reform will connect the dots to this political and economic revolution. Neo-liberalism arrived on the political scene with Margaret Thatcher in 1979. As Susan George in her article, A Short History of Neo-liberalism, states, "The Iron Lady was herself a disciple of Friedrich von Hayek, she was a social Darwinist and had no qualms about expressing her convictions. She was well known for justifying her programme with the single word TINA, short for There Is No Alternative. The central value of Thatcher's doctrine and of neo-liberalism itself is the notion of competition—competition between nations, regions, firms and of course between individuals." These reforms were no lucky break for capitalists. There was a concerted effort by foundations, institutes, research centers, publications, scholars, writers and public relations hacks seeking to overthrow the older Social Democratic system (driven by more theoretically sound Keynesian economics). This insidious vanguard would eventually enlist (elect) Reagan to the American throne and unleash this new weapon on America.

Many of us are awakening to how these inhuman economic policies have wrought havoc on a global scale through a crop of un-

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JACKBOOT “DEMOCRACY” HOMELAND (IN)SECURITY FEEDS STATE TERRORISM IN OUR CITIES

FW Albert Parsons Jr. — There is a wave of violence and oppression sweeping across the United States - and much of it is perpetuated at taxpayer expense by law and order agencies!

According to a recent Amnesty International report, there are now over 17,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S., but fewer than 100 independent citizen oversight bodies. In other words, the majority of police in this country act with impunity, lacking any serious democratic accountability to the communities which they supposedly serve and protect. The statistical fallout is rather grim:

- *Less than half of police misconduct cases in NYC result in any sort of investigation
- *Lethal force is widely applied — 31 justified homicides by Milwaukee police between 1985-1997
- *Over 100 people have died from OC pepper spray in the U.S. while in police custody
- *Over 100 people have also died in the U.S. from suffocation while being restrained by police
- *Racial profiling is rampant — in 2000 African-Americans received 89% of anti-loitering offenses in Madison, WI
- *Wisconsin is now home to 83 SWAT teams — including Forest County with a total resident population of just 9,212
- *According to a 1998 survey, Manhattan alone has over 3000 street surveillance cameras

Adding fresh fuel to this fire is over \$3.5 billion in post 9/11 federal funding for Homeland Security, including \$500 million for local and state counter-terrorism efforts. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has been a strong advocate of Homeland Security block grants, with Exec. Dir. Thomas J. Cochran proclaiming in a 3/19/2002 press release “we must forge a new federal-local partnership to make sure that our local troops have the resources needed for this new challenge.” Behind this insidious program will be acquisition of sophisticated weaponry and surveillance technology, expansion of federal military training to local police agencies, and expanded public-private partnerships to enhance law-and-order capacity. One such entity is the Urban Security Initiative Policy Board of the Polytechnic University of New York to which Madison, WI Mayor Sue Bauman was recently appointed for a two year term. No doubt, many of the corporate sponsors underwriting the Mayors, Summit will be looking for some kick-back Homeland Security contracts to compensate them for their upfront investment.

Community Policing or Urban Paramilitarism?

Community policing has become a touchy-feely “buzzword” in many circles obscuring its real intent — namely to draft citizens into volunteer surveillance under the guise of “community participation” while shifting resources away from normal police activities (rescuing cats from trees, helping stranded motorists) to heavyhanded tactical operations. All pretense went out the window with the creation of the White House Office of Homeland Security, which is now unabashedly recruiting citizens — even children — to become state snitches and police auxiliaries (<http://www.citizencorps.gov/>). Under the direction of Homeland Security Czar (and death penalty aficionado), Thomas Ridge, these initiatives include creating Citizen Corps Councils nationwide, an expanded neighborhood watch program focusing on anti-terrorism, a new Volunteers in Public Service (VIPS) program that will tap into civic-minded do-gooders for minor law-and-order work to free up officers for frontline duty, as well as the Terrorist Information and Prevention System (TIPS) utilizing well-placed citizenry as “eyes and ears” of the state. One is almost reminded of the good old days of the Prohibition Era when law-abiding KKK members and UW fraternity brothers were deputized by local police to crack down on unruly bootleg immigrants in Madison’s Green Bush Neighborhood.

More Bang for the Buck — Law and Order R&D for a Hellish Urban Future

Back in 1972 the U.S. National Science Foundation reported on 34 innovative riot control weapons then in the lab. Almost all are now on the street and even worse stuff is in the pipeline. Military units and police forces across the U.S. have ready access to a whole arsenal of

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WOBBLY CULTURE NOTES



FW Carl Aniel — As many of you already know, Sister Worker Vicki Guzman has left the building. One of our favorite singer-musicians, Vicki has headed out of town to further serenade the flames of discontent. Much thanks go to Vicki for all her efforts, particularly at our sing-a-longs and rallies.

Fortunately, Vicki’s latest CD, “Left is My Favorite Color”, is now available, and we can keep track of her rise to fame via the Web, at <www.vickiguzman.com>.

Also, the General Executive Board recently received a General Membership Branch charter application from Pittsburgh, which featured among the signers, Anne Feeney, another troubadour who has visited and performed in Madison many times. Feeney’s “Look To The Left” CD is available and you can visit her web site at <www.annefeene.com>.

And our friend to the North (Minneapolis), Sam Adams, has a CD out with his band, The Blackbirds. The unique instrumentation of the Blackbirds, and their innovative approach to arrangement and performance, provide an excellent vehicle for the intensity and lyricism of traditional music from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and Brittany. Check them out on the web at <www.blackbirdsceltic.com>. Here’s hoping Sam is at the Winnipeg Wobfest. 🎵

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or email: madwobs@egroups.com

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JACKBOOT “DEMOCRACY” from Pg. 2

chemical and kinetic weapons, stroboscopic and pulsed sound weapons, electro-shock and pyrotechnic weapons, dart guns, stink bombs, the list goes on and on. The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention bans wartime use of pepper spray - aka oleoresin capsicum (OC) — but this deadly “non-lethal” weapon is now commonly issued to police officers for domestic deployment. For instance, the UW-Madison police had few qualms about using pepper spray on peaceful anti-sweatshop activists during the Bascom Hall sit-in in Feb. 2000. Protesters in Seattle got all sorts of souvenirs in the form of scars, burns, and broken bones stemming from new ergonomically designed extra long riot batons, beanbag projectiles filled with metal shot, and concussion grenades.

In a prophetic 1998 DoD report, Air Force Major Mark R. Thomas notes that “civilian leaders may be more inclined to address future domestic crisis situations using military forces...As non-lethal confrontation becomes second nature to U.S. fighting forces, one of the few remaining pragmatic objections to their use in domestic scenarios (ie the likelihood of lethal military force being exercised against the citizenry) will be radically diminished. This is an ominous prospect to say the least.”

Not only ominous, but downright horrific — and almost guaranteed in the new era of law-and-order paranoia when terrorism has been officially misconstrued to include anything that might pose a “threat to life, limb or property” according to WI Attorney General, Jim Doyle. The 21st century urban battlefield is upon us and our democratic freedom will probably be one of the first victims chalked up as just more “collateral damage.” 🎵

Submission Guidelines

Please send submissions as email attachments (*don't just copy and paste into the body of your email message!*)

This will allow us to get the newsletter out faster and make sure that your formatting (*italics, bold type, etc.*) is preserved.

Let us know how you would like to be identified in the article byline.

Please also make it clear if you would prefer your article to run unedited. Otherwise, we may edit for clarity and length. Where major edits are performed we will jointly credit the editors of *Prairie Fire*.

Book Review:

BREAKING THE SHACKLES OF HISTORY *Workin' on the Chain Gang* by Walter Mosley

By Camy Matthey — It was one of those serendipitous events -when you cross paths with someone at a party whom you haven't seen in years. You play catch-up on news. You hear that they're still having a difficult time making the farm go, and Don has been working on the line at General Motors for months.

It was an awkward thing for me to wrap my mind around. He'd been farming for years, doing construction on the side, had hopes of getting back to blowing glass. This wasn't some sellout; this wasn't the kind of news where you paste some smile on your face and chit-chat about the great benefits of the job. This was shitty. It wasn't about losing convictions; it was about losing the capacity to uphold them when the economic and political system you're imbedded in is set up against your best intentions for right livelihood.

Curiously, Don had a lot of time to read at GM. In fact, in the 17 second intervals he had between screwing bolts on luxury trucks, he had read *Workin' on the Chain Gang* by Walter Mosley. *Workin'* was really worth checking out, Don told me; it sinks its fangs pretty deep into America's corporate hide. It's about neo-slavery in America. That got my attention.

I got the book from the library. Not since reading Carol Bly's book *Changing the Bully Who Rules the World* have I been struck so hard by a hurricane of fresh language and insight about the ethical landscape of America.

In America, as in all societies governed by market forces, exchanges based on individual gain and profit play an enormously corrosive role in human economy. Mosley's argument -which is both fierce and brilliant- is that though oppressive forces have always been more visible in the lives of blacks, whites in increasing numbers are experiencing -as solitary and alienated individuals- the disenfranchisement that black people have experienced as a groups for centuries. Now everyone is a potential victim.

As mechanisms of social control funnel into the hands of an increasingly consolidated group of elites, the problem has become the enslavement of a whole nation to the rather narrow goals of the few who own and control almost everything. But each one of us, black and white alike, can work toward a frank reckoning of the true state of our society.

Mosley's message is emphatic: The historical oppression of black Americans is part of a larger malignancy that now pervades every cultural group, creed, race, and religion. An understanding of the black experience in America can serve as a torch in the darkness.

Today, workers are not just the engines of production, it is not just our labor that is being stolen, but by default to the desire for affluence that is so heavily indoctrinated by the power-elites, we have become the compliant consumers of the products we are driven (here and elsewhere in the world) so cheaply and so dearly to produce. Dazzled by the spectacles and illusions of prosperity, we become ensnared; we “need” what we are told, and go to extraordinary lengths to claim the trappings of a lifestyle that shackles us in the chains of our own defeat. As we lose the inclination to discover these truths, Mosley warns, we allow “ourselves to become property, neo-slaves, with no more stature or purpose than factory chickens.”

That we readily accept and voluntarily endure this state of affairs is the greatest achievement of the corporate mind industry. In fact, we are so complicit in this duplicity, that few of us have noticed that the word “citizen” has been transmuted into the word “consumer,” and fewer still are cognizant of the fact that democracy has begun to be understood as a consumer choice over a given variety of goods, and less and less about people taking political process into their own hands.

Mosley wants each and every one of us to reckon with the truth about our society and our role as “cogs” or “ghosts” in the machine. For those of us in America who are struggling for competence and right livelihood, and who are longing to unshackle themselves from a system that values money over humanity, power over truth, conformity over creativity, this book offers insights that glitter in your mind long after you've finished the book.

This is what Mosley wants Americans to say and remember: “I built America...as did my ancestors, and America owes me something. I am here to call that debt due.” 🎵

NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE MAYORS

from Pg. 1

democratic, shadow ruling bodies that grew from the economic restructuring after World War II. These bodies include the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and IMF), the WTO, and the G8. Around the globe, communities are rising up against externally imposed "structural adjustments," austerity plans, and privatization and tariff liberalization schemes that amount to forced corporate takeovers of their countries. The past year has seen the collapse of one neo-liberal poster child, Argentina, and other nations, from the United Kingdom to Nicaragua, have seen firsthand the degradation of public services and quality of living that accompany the shift to neo-liberal policies. It is easy to see the United States as the top of the neoliberal food chain, as these policies are often most visible through US foreign policy and the actions of US-founded multinational corporations; however, this simple analysis overlooks the international and portable nature of corporate power. In the age of global neo-liberal policy, nationality alone cannot protect anyone from the blind hunger and long arm of capitalist greed.

The goals of neo-liberalism are deeply embedded in the American domestic agenda and foreign policy alike. Research reveals that many "non-political" domestic policy organizations, the USCM included, serve as the advance guard for a neo-liberal invasion of our urban and rural communities, furthering the ideas of globally portable capital and exposing policymakers en masse to concentrated neo-liberal rhetoric. When in doubt, we can turn to Martinez and Garcia's earlier breakdown of neo-liberal tactics as a simple litmus test to expose the ideological slant of such organizations.

The Rule of the Market: We all know that this has been a major buzzword (including its twins, "market forces" and "increased competition") for the past twenty years in America. One prime example is the shift in pension funds in America. Once a responsibility of employers to provide for their workers, now corporate America profits from citizens gambling away their hard earned dollars in stock market speculation and volatile derivatives.

Cutting Public Expenditure for Social Services: Can you say W2? Crafted in our very own state. Other examples include the gutting of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health services, the trend toward phasing out public services in deference to "faith-based initiatives", the near-elimination of public health funding, and the abuse of public resources by shifting funds from urban housing and neighborhood-driven development efforts to gentrification projects.

Deregulation: Deregulation has been the driving force behind many grand schemes to "reduce costs while creating competition." The worst example for deregulation has been the California power production network, culminating in the Enron scandal. Other examples include telephone companies, water utilities, and city services — all initiatives supported by members of the USCM.

Privatization: Prison Industrial Complex, W2, Edison/Charter Schools, "managed care"... Need we say more? Privatization works hand in hand with deregulation to replace affordable public services with profit-driven business enterprises owing no allegiance to their customers. America's mayors have been among the worst perpetrators of both, relying on short-term budget reduction and tax cuts to gain political cachet while ultimately degrading the core services of their communities, sometimes beyond recovery.

Eliminating the Concept of "The Public Good" or "Community": This has been a blatant and unapologetic shift in American government, from the local level on up. Instead of the public good and the welfare of communities, decisions are made based on cost-benefit analyses, analyses which cannot measure, and therefore do not consider, quality of living, community cohesion, and democratic participation. Instead, citizens are pitted against one another for shrinking community funds and programs, while the real wealth of even America's most affluent regions is increasingly funneled out of communities and into the bank accounts of financial speculators, multinational corporations and holding companies.

Just as we are now seeing through the smoke and mirrors of the WTO, IMF, and World Bank; we must be critical of our domestic policies and institutions. The USCM is a prime example. Just as the World Bank was created to assist in post WWII reconstruction, the USCM was created to help pull our country out of the Great Depression — and just as European reconstruction and the Dust Bowl days have faded, so too should these organi-

Continued on pg. 6

WOBS AND DOCKERS

from Pg. 1

longshoreman; at others, it was predominately Wobblies. The whole exercise was a labor of love; in an out of the way corner of an area away from the active parts of the city, informational picketing had little value. The audience was already in the know about the issues and few passions played. In fact, ILA members from another local passed through the pickets on their way to load a cargo of grain at a grain elevator.

International Materials Inc, of Bryn Mawr PA, a large company that seems to specialize in handling bulk cargos all over the globe, did the actual cargo work. They supplied specialized unloading equipment to speed the job, and of course, paid substandard wages. Their workers resided in a motel for the duration and their wages left town with them, thus producing little or no local economic impact. The clinker was unloaded and the CHIOS SAILOR left to load grain in Thunder Bay in the wee hours of the 15th.

This season in Milwaukee, the Badger Cement Products, LLC's clinker was an especially important loss to longshoremen and operating engineers. One of the main international trade patterns in the Great Lakes is steel inbound for such ports as Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, and Milwaukee. Vessels then routinely proceed to an upper lakes port such as Duluth, Minnesota or Thunder Bay, Ontario to load grain for export. Occasionally a ship loads grain in Milwaukee. The steel tariffs decreed by Baby Bush have wrecked the traditional trade patterns and thrown a lot of freight to the railroads. Also, with few ships arriving in the Great Lakes, a large portion of export grain will be shipped through non-union shippers and carriers on the Mississippi River system. Great Lakes longshoremen and others dependent upon shipping are hurting in a big way.

The dislocations brought about by these local assaults on workers can be disorienting and disheartening. The effects of globalization were here played on a neighborhood scale. The elements were all there: the "foreign" corporation setting up shop, the loss of local economic effects, the further erosion of communities, the classic "Race to The Bottom" in terms of pay and conditions, and the concentration of economic power and wealth into fewer hands than before. These problems are larger than a few dozen dockers in Milwaukee and must be addressed with the big picture in mind. For example, the cargo was loaded in Cyprus. Would Cypriot dockers refuse to load a ship if they knew how their efforts would harm other workers where the ship is unloaded? Or, is there some way that low wages and maximum profits benefit the community? Garrison Keillor talks about people who think money is worth more than anything you can buy with it. These are the ones we have to fight against and win.



Prairie Fire, Vol. 2 No. 2

CALENDAR

OF UPCOMING IWW EVENTS IN WISCONSIN AND THE UPPER MIDWEST

EVERY SUNDAY 5:00PM
Madison Area General Defense Committee
 Memorial Union, UW-Madison
 (check TITU for room)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12TH 6:30PM
Milwaukee IWW meeting
 People's Books

THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH
 6:30PM POTLUCK, 7PM MEETING
Madison IWW GMB
 Social Justice Center 1202 Williamson Street

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10TH 6:30PM
Milwaukee IWW meeting
 People's Books

JULY 13TH - 15TH
Upper Midwest Wobfest
 Winnipeg, Manitoba
 (For more information, contact Patrick
 at greenarchy36@hotmail.com)

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH
 6:30PM POTLUCK, 7PM MEETING
Madison IWW GMB
 Rainbow Bookstore Co-Op 458 W. Gilman Street

The annual Wobbly canoe trip is scheduled for the first weekend in July, i.e. July 5-7. As in the past, those who would like to camp out Friday evening, we will be on the sandbar at Spring Green by afternoon/evening. We will camp there, just upstream from the boat launch. You can park your car there in the lot. Then Saturday, those who don't camp out Friday night will arrive and join the others. The rental canoes will arrive @11 AM or so and we will hit the river at noon sharp (so please make plans to be there by 11!).

When we find an agreeable sandbar to camp, we will stop for the night. Sunday is a leisurely paddle, stopping at various bars to swim, play frisbee, have lunch, drink beer, etc. We will arrive at the take-out point by 5 PM and be shuttled back to the cars at Spring Green. You may rent a canoe for roughly \$35 for the weekend. That's only \$17.50 per person for a lot of fun.

If you have your own canoe, you may wish to use it. There is like a \$10 shuttle fee per canoe that Pete will charge to haul your canoe back to Spring Green. Please let me know if you want to go, and we can go ahead and reserve the necessary canoes. There are usually about 25-30 people who make the trip. You'll need a tent, sleeping bag, food, water, beer, etc.

Hope you can go!

Contact Ron Kaminkow <ronkaminkow@yahoo.com>
 P.S. You can call me at 773-255-5412.

Prairie Fire, Vol. 2 No. 2

To You
 by Jodi Vander Molen
 Madison, WI

To you,
 vigilant protectors of your
 government-issue Social Security
 number

To you,
 always choosing the
 smallest kitten
 in the bunch

To you,
 oh creators of awkward silences why can't we all
 just get along it's the
 holidays

To you,
 who face the wind who feed the waves
 who rock the boat you row
 up
 stream

To you, the foot that squeals
 the brakes to stop
 one pebble
 from the
 brink

To you,
 conscientious objectors,
 objecting, objecting, objecting, objecting
 objecting, objecting,
 ob
 ject
 ing

To you,
 Facing down a mushroom
 cloud with force of
 one word:
 No

To you,
 soft look of love in your eyes

To you,
 sobbing into hands
 toward television
 screen

To you,
 patting them dry
 grabbing a bell, you boom British-are-coming style
 "Madness! Madness!"
 through
 the streets

To you,
 Bonnie-Urfers-Sam-Days-Barbara-Lees-Jane-John
 Does-Dave-Dellingers
 Zinns-Baez-Gandhis-Badshah
 Khans

To you,
 Whose numbers belie the
 might
 of your song

To you, I don't salute,
 I toast:

As you walk,
 you dream us
 free

Book Review: THE SINS OF THEIR TIMES: *Two Young Adult Novels In Perspective*

SW Lea Zeldin, Madison GMB — This is a review of two books of the category usually referred to as “young adult.” Both the writing and the plots are certainly adult, and the youth classification means the protagonists are adolescents.

“Coram Boy” is written by Jamila Gavin who was born in India to an English mother and an Indian father, and at age 11 settled with her family in England. Her previous novels were shortlisted for the Guardian Children’s Fiction Award. “Coram Boy” is her first novel to be published in the United States and could be called an historical novel.

“3 Days Off” is written by Susie Morgenstern, an American living in Nice, France for the last 30 years who has written over 40 books for children. She is considered one of the most popular children’s book writers in France.

Both of these novels, “Coram Boy” reflecting the social conditions of an England of several centuries ago, and “3 Days Off” about an older teen coming into maturity in today’s world translate the “sins” of their time into ours.

In “Coram Boy,” Wisconsin readers may be reminded of the recent tragedy of a first year college student in northwestern Wisconsin who bled to death on a bathroom floor after delivering her baby, alone. She had told no one of her pregnancy. The baby also died after several days. (Another reminder, the Wisconsin State Legislature has assured that mothers leaving their newborn babies at hospitals or a facility like a police station will be guaranteed anonymity and will not be prosecuted for abandoning their babies.)

Population control in 18th century England was not only brutal but direct. The city alleys and trash bins, the country byways and hedgerows were littered with dead newly-born infants. For those too tender hearted to so dispose of their infants, there were itinerant pedlars who could be bribed to take them to a poorhouse in another county. The prologue to “Coram Boy” is an apocryphal tale illustrating well the planned indifference of a society that did not want to know, hear or change.

Into this 18th century world of infanticide and child slavery, there also were private efforts of reform. It would not be fair to ignore the indirect ways in which the authorities reduced the population: women suffering from post partum depression were recognized in English Common Law as not being responsible for killing their children if the deaths occurred before the age of 18 months, middle class infants were routinely taken from their mothers and sent by open carriage to working class and peasant women to be nursed and cared for. The ‘entail’ law which mandated that only the oldest son could inherit sent younger sons to the four corners of the earth to find their fortunes and uphold the English raj, the imperialism of a maturing capitalism. As for the females, they were breeding stock for the fame and fortune of their fathers and brothers.

This is a horrific story but it does have a happy ending of sorts, and should be a good read for adolescents and their parents alike.

“3 Days Off” is a slim volume dealing with the everyday angst of a handsome apathetic 17 year-old in a working class French suburban high school. He is the despair of his teacher, not because he acts out but because he is a classroom lump, a sluggard, obviously uninterested in anything she has to offer. At home he is not much better, glued to a television set, interacting with his mother only when he wants to watch one program and she another. His is a single parent family, the father abandoned the family 7 years before after losing his job. The mother supports her family with a lousy paying job she hates, but sees no alternative to, in a small armaments factory. She has intellectual aspirations, wanting to read books and see the TV talking heads discuss philosophy. Her son, mired in his own isolation and marginality, can’t see the point.

One day in class he feels badgered and harassed by the teacher to say something; What are you interested in?” He isn’t interested in anything, what does she want from him? What do you dream of? Pushed too far, he blurts out, “I dream of seeing you without your panties on.”

He is suspended for three days. Not wanting to tell his mother, his three days are an inadvertent voyage of discovery. He leaves his suburb, walks to the next bigger town (which is

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zations. These institutions no longer serve their original missions. Moreover, driven by the need to justify their existence in a peacetime, economically robust climate, they have morphed into entities that blatantly seek to further the neo-liberal agenda — an agenda which ensures that there will always be war, famine and hardship enough that some will see the logic in perpetuating these outdated institutions.

Neo-liberal policies and the logic of crisis creation are well served by such USCM programs as the USCM Business Council (Enronesque corporations feasting off our communities funds), the USCM C.O.P.S. Program (the largest domestic military [i.e. police — see *Domestic (In)security* elsewhere in this issue] funding program in the world — \$7.6 billion), and USCM support for global trade agreements (NAFTA, FTAA, etc.). Furthermore, the USCM is attempting to go international with its recent creation of the International Conference of Mayors. The founding conference was entirely funded by advocates of the privatization of water, a deathblow for Third World nations.

It is past time to make the connections between the struggles occurring in our communities, against police brutality, racist policies, urban decay, and greed, to the larger struggles going on globally against the many divisions of the neo-liberal militia. Where these institutions ever had a reason to exist, those reasons are past. We do not need and cannot tolerate ruling bodies that have no responsibility to the people they claim to serve.

The existence of such groups makes little sense in a world that believes in learning from past mistakes and working toward a better future. Democracy and community cannot coexist with exclusive, ruling-class organizations that govern without accountability, that make policy without accountability, and that regularly act with impunity against the common good. 🗳️

also a suburb, but bigger), works hard at an unloading job, gets paid for it and uses the money to go to a big city by train. He wants to spend his money on a prostitute, but can’t figure out how to find one. Instead, he joins a demonstration about education, meets a college student there and goes to her apartment. He, the girl and her boyfriend go to a foreign movie. For the first time, he has to join his brain in reading and seeing the movie, This book also has a happy ending.

For a realistic look at a young person trying to ignore the social institutions that he feels oppress him, if you are a teacher with kids like this in class, read this book. More importantly, don’t be afraid to suggest “3 Days Off” to your class for an assignment. And don’t be afraid if they tell you what they think. If you and the kids are lucky, you may both get suspended 🗳️

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“The Union is like having herpes” — Whole Foods founder and CEO John Mackey MADISON WHOLE FOODS WORKERS BATTLE BOSSES “The idea of a common goal is absurd” — Madison Whole Foods worker

By Lillian Chane — For six weeks, workers at the Whole Foods Market in Madison have been carrying out an intense unionizing effort, with the assistance of Local 1444 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). The campaign reached a high point in late May when, after gathering union authorization cards from a significant majority of employees, workers presented Whole Foods with a letter demanding recognition of the union for the purposes of negotiating a contract.

As expected, Whole Foods refused to recognize the union, and even went so far as to respond in a faxed response to the UFCW that they “seriously doubt” a majority of workers support unionizing.

The UFCW filed a petition for an election with the National Labor Relations Board the following day. The Board has set July 12th as the date when workers will vote whether or not to unionize.

The same day the petition was filed, more than 75 Whole Foods workers, UFCW members, community members, activists, and members from the labor community rallied outside Whole Foods to show their support for the unionizing effort (see <http://www.madison.indymedia.org> for coverage, photos, and video).

The campaign began in early April, when many workers—already upset at the constant understaffing, low wages, infrequent and indiscriminate pay raises, and lack of respect from management—became furious when management imposed a stricter dress code policy on them, slickly titled “That Whole Foods Style.”

Reading through the policy, one wonders if it’s for real. All workers must wear the same color hat. Shirts must be tucked in “when appropriate.” Buttons on aprons are no longer allowed, unless they’re advertising Whole Foods promotions. No pants without hems. “Shocking or offensive hairstyles” are not permitted. Hair must be a “natural” color. Shorts are allowed, but only if they’re a solid color. Facial piercings are no longer allowed, except for one piercing on the side of the nose, as these are “socially acceptable” (in the words of the store manager). Clothing with any sort of “political message” is also no longer allowed. Infuriating as the new dress code policy was, many saw it as the needed spark to incite workers to finally fight back and demand a voice in their workplace. After several failed attempts at discussing complaints with upper management, the desire to unionize spread even further, as many realized that unionizing was the only avenue for workers to obtain this voice.

Soon thereafter, a workers contacted and met with representatives from the UFCW Local 1444. The UFCW has made previous efforts to organize Whole Foods stores—including Berkeley, St. Paul, and the Madison store when it opened in 1997—without success. Indeed, up until now, it seemed that nothing could break through the intense anti-union environment created by CEO and founder John Mackey.

Mackey opened his first store in 1980 in Austin, Texas, under the name Safer Way, and saw the chain grow rapidly—900 percent throughout the 1990s. There are currently 131 Whole Foods Markets nationwide. Now seeking to expand internationally, the first store outside the United States opened earlier this month in Toronto, Canada. None are unionized.

Whole Foods has built its success on the commodification of progressive ideals for profit. With a public image of social and environmental consciousness, it has created a successful marketing strategy that targets people who consider themselves politically aware. It’s a perfect match, many say: customers who want a sense of being political and a company that gives them that sense in exchange for their money. It may be the very pinnacle of co-opted politics: politics you can purchase.

Part of this progressive, new-age façade is a “team-concept” approach to management. According to Whole Foods, philosophy, they “empower [workers] to make their own decisions, creating a respectful workplace where people are treated fairly and are highly motivated to succeed.” Mackey argues that his company is a “social system,” not a hierarchy. Many current and former workers find these ideas ridiculous.

“Although Whole Foods says it’s based on the concept of decentralized teamwork and democracy, there is a clear distinction between who has

a voice and who doesn’t, especially when it comes to decision-making,” a former worker says. Mackey’s philosophy extends to an overt hatred of unions. “Here’s the way I like to think of it,” Mackey once said. “The union is like having herpes. It doesn’t kill you, but it’s unpleasant and inconvenient and it stops a lot of people from becoming your lover” (Business and Society Review, 6/22/92). In fact, in a lengthy right-wing libertarian diatribe entitled, *Beyond Unions*, Mackey attacks unions as “parasites.”

He goes so far as to state that one of Whole Foods, most important missions is to change the widespread belief that management and workers are inherently adversarial. “There is no intrinsic reason why employers and employees must struggle with one another,” he wrote. The opposite is true, he argued: “Management and labor should work together as partners—with openness, trust, community, shared purpose, joy, and love—to fulfill their common goal of serving the customer’s needs and desires.” It doesn’t take much of an analysis of labor relationships to understand the deceit underlying such a statement: The very fact that there is a distinction between management and labor underscores the fact that they are not equal, and are not partners.

“The idea of a common goal is absurd,” says another current worker. “I’m here to get a paycheck to live on. Sure, I realize that my paycheck is somewhat dependent on customer satisfaction, but not nearly to the extent that it is to management. Management’s common goal is to turn a profit.”

Workers who are part of the organizing committee say many workers have, up until now, felt disempowered to change anything. “I don’t think it occurred to many people that it is possible for employees to have a say in workplace conditions, policy decisions, wages, and benefits, until it was explained it to them by their fellow workers,” one worker says.

As word spread among workers, excitement of unionizing grew. The organizing committee, a group of 15 workers, has, with UFCW’s assistance, driven the campaign thus far. The fact that this is a worker-initiated, worker-driven campaign is very significant. Campaigns initiated and led by a strong worker organizing committee are always more successful than campaigns driven by union organizers not employed at the particular workplace.

Working continuously for the past few weeks, committee members are learning first-hand

the struggles facing the broader labor movement. From strategically contacting workers and explaining the issues to them, to further educating themselves and sharing their knowledge with others, to trying to anticipate and inoculate people against management’s response, the work involved is overwhelming.

But what’s remarkable, organizing committee members say, is that they were able to organize for weeks before management was made aware of their efforts. It was this ability to work strategically, without having to simultaneously combat a union-busting campaign by management, that put them in such an advantageous position.

Once management found out, however, the anti-union campaign began. Misinformation is being spread. Employees have already been forced to attend a meeting at which a corporate manager read aloud from a script about the “evils” of unionizing. Although Whole Foods Madison hung a banner shortly after they opened—in response to picketing from the UFCW—which stated, “Whole Foods supports the right of its workers to unionize should they choose to do so,” they are clearly planning to ignore this promise as well.

Although committee members expressed certainty about the success of this effort, they also emphasize the need for community support, particularly as Whole Foods intensifies their anti-union campaign.

“What’s going to be our biggest challenge is just convincing workers that even though management’s message might sound believable and scary, we need to stick together and remember that only by negotiating a contract will we have a say in our workplace,” one committee member says.

Community members are encouraged to voice their support for this unionizing effort to management and workers. Visit Whole Foods at 3013 University Avenue, call (608) 233-9566, or fax (608) 233-8066. 🗳️

Whole Foods Organizing Resources:
www.wholeworkersunite.org
email: wholeworkersunite@yahoo.com
also, check
www.madison.indymedia.org
for coverage
If you don't have access to the internet,
call: 608-217-4794.